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Docket No. 30010-A

Date August 23, 2000

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09/644764



Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing under 35 U.S.C. 111 and 37. C.F.R. 1.53 is the patent application of:

INVENTOR(S): DEBORAH TATE WELSH

FOR: SINGLE TAG PET REGISTRATION, SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM WITH MUNICIPAL LICENSING  
OPTION

Enclosed are:

- ☒ Certificate of Mailing with Express Mail Mailing Label No. EL618532010US
- ☒ 2 sheets of drawing(s)
- ☒ Combined Declaration and Power of Attorney
- ☐ An Assignment of the invention to together with the recording fee of \$40.00.
- ☒ A verified statement to establish small entity status under 37 CFR 1.9 and 37 CFR 1.27.
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement

The filing fee has been calculated as shown below:

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FOR:	NO. FILED	NO. EXTRA
BASIC FEE		
TOTAL CLAIMS	25-20=	* 5
INDEP. CLAIMS	3-3=	* 0
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM PRESENT		

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SMALL ENTITY	
RATE	FEE
	\$ 345.00
x 9	\$ 45.00
x 39	
+130	
TOTAL	\$ 390.00

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HOVEY, WILLIAMS, TIMMONS & COLLINS

By

Thomas B. Luebbering, Reg. No. 37,874  
2405 Grand Boulevard, Suite 400  
Kansas City, Missouri 64108  
ATTORNEYS FOR APPLICANT(S)  
(816) 474-9050

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CERTIFICATION UNDER 37 C.F.R. 1.10

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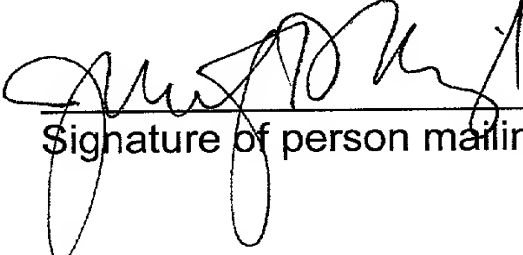
Enclosed for filing is the application for United States Letters Patent of DEBORAH TATE WELSH, Attorney Docket No. 30010-A, entitled SINGLE TAG PET REGISTRATION, SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM WITH MUNICIPAL LICENSING OPTION, including: **Transmittal, Specification, Claims, Abstract, 2 sheets informal drawings, Combined Declaration and Power of Attorney, Small Entity Statement, \$390.00 filing fee, and return card.**

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Applicant or Patentee WELSH, DEBORAH TATE	Attorney's Docket No. 30010-A
Serial or Patent No:	
File or Issued:	
For: SINGLE TAG PET REGISTRATION, SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM WITH MUNICIPAL LICENSING OPTION	

**VERIFIED STATEMENT (DECLARATION) CLAIMING SMALL ENTITY STATUS  
(37 CFR 1.9(f) AND 1.27(b)) - INDEPENDENT INVENTOR**

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that I qualify as an independent inventor as defined in 37 CFR 1.9(c) for purposes of paying reduced fees under Section 41(a) and (b) of Title 35, United States Code, to the Patent and Trademark Office with regard to the invention entitled described in

☒ the specification filed herewith

☐ application serial no. , filed

☐ patent no. , issued

I have not assigned, granted, conveyed or licensed and am under no obligation under contract or law to assign, grant, convey or license, any rights in the invention to any person who could not be classified as an independent inventor under 37 CFR 1.9(c) if that person had made the invention, or to any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(d) or a nonprofit organization under 37 CFR 1.9(e).

Each person, concern or organization to which I have assigned, granted, conveyed, or licensed or am under an obligation under contract or law to assign, grant, convey, or license any rights in the invention is listed below:

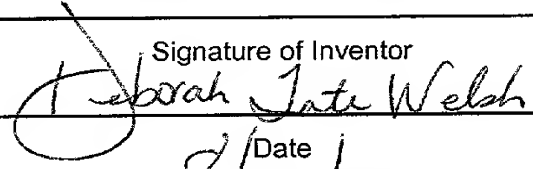
- ☒ no such person, concern or organization  
☐ persons, concerns or organizations listed below\*

Name
Address
<input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL <input type="checkbox"/> SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN <input type="checkbox"/> NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
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<input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL <input type="checkbox"/> SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN <input type="checkbox"/> NONPROFIT organization

\*NOTE: Separate verified statements are required from each named person, concern or organization having rights to the invention averring to their status as small entities. (37 CFR 1.27)

I acknowledge the duty to file, in this application or patent, notification of any change in status resulting in loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the earliest of the issue fee or any maintenance fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate. (37 CFR 1.28(b)).

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application, any patent issuing thereon, or any patent to which this verified statement is directed.

Name of Inventor DEBORAH TATE WELSH	Name of Inventor	Name of Inventor
Signature of Inventor 	Signature of Inventor	Signature of Inventor
Date 8/23/00	Date	Date

## 5 RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application hereby incorporates and, with regard to all common subject matter, claims priority of a previously filed nonprovisional utility application entitled Pet Registration, Search and Retrieval System, Serial No. 09/483,172, filed January 14, 2000.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

## 1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to pets and methods for reuniting lost pets with their owners. More particularly, the invention relates to a nationwide, web-based pet registration, search, and retrieval system.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

It has been estimated that millions of pets are lost each year in the U.S. alone. Current methods for reuniting lost pets with their owners are either largely ineffective, too costly, or too complicated. For example, one such method requires a pet owner to purchase a personalized pet tag for their pet having the pet owner's name, address, and phone number printed thereon. A person who finds a pet with such a tag can then read the tag and call the pet's owner. This method is effective as long as the information on the tag is current; however, if the pet owner moves and/or changes phone numbers, the pet tag must be replaced with a more current tag or else it is useless. Furthermore, many tag-based methods require multiple tags, including a rabies vaccination tag, a municipal licensing tag, and the registration tag used by the pet identification system itself.

Other methods for locating lost pets include implanting identifying microchips in the pets or tattooing the pets. Both of these methods are expensive and painful for the pets and do not permit a finder of a pet to search for and contact the pet's owner at any time of day. Moreover, with the microchip methods, the finder of the pet must first determine that the pet has an implanted microchip and then locate a veterinarian or other animal facility that has a microchip scanner that can read the implanted microchip.

Several Internet web sites exist that assist in locating lost pets. These sites use a variety of methods such as posting pictures and descriptions of lost pets and information regarding where pets were lost. Unfortunately, the descriptions and information posted on these sites is often too limited and subjective to permit an exact match between a lost pet and its owner. Moreover, pet owners who lose their pets often do not add descriptions of their lost pets to these sites until days after their pets have been lost. If a person finds a pet and accesses one of the sites before the pet owner adds a description of the lost pet to the site, the finder will be unable to locate the pet owner.

Another limitation in the pet field is lack of compliance with municipal pet licensing laws. Many municipalities require pet licensing based on prerequisite proof of rabies vaccination. Although pet licensing generates some revenue, the costs of administration at the municipal level are significant. Furthermore, compliance is typically low, possibly due to the inconvenience of traveling to the local licensing office or a lack of awareness of the licensing requirement.

#### OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention solves the above-described problems and provides a distinct advance in the art of lost pet location methods and systems. More particularly, the present invention provides a nationwide, web-based pet registration, search, and retrieval system that is highly effective, inexpensive, and easy to use, and that allows for simultaneous municipal licensing.

The present invention is preferably implemented with a host computer that may be accessed by users via a communications network such as the Internet. Pet owners may register their pets with the host computer by providing information relating to their pets and contact information such as their name, address, and phone numbers. Registration is preferably performed in conjunction with rabies vaccination, and may include municipal licensing. This information is then manually or electronically entered into the host computer where it is stored in a searchable database. If the pet owners move and/or change phone numbers, they may contact the host computer at any time and update their contact information.

A person who finds a lost pet may access the host computer in an attempt to locate the pet's owner. The host computer prompts the finder to enter certain

information relating to the pet and then compares the entered information in the database to the information that was previously entered by the pet owners. If a match is found, the host computer provides the finder with the contact information for the pet owner.

5               In preferred forms, the method of the present invention is used in conjunction with conventional pet vaccination procedures and utilizes a single, multi-purpose tag that both provides rabies vaccination information and indicates that a pet is registered with the host computer. Specifically, when a pet owner has his or her pet vaccinated, the veterinarian provides the multi-purpose rabies tag and encourages the  
10 pet owner to register their pet with the host computer. The pet owner may do so by manually filling out a form provided by the veterinarian or some other distribution source or by electronically entering the information while online with the host computer. When registering their pet, an owner may also be prompted to provide additional information such as their name, address, phone numbers, e-mail address, the pet's name, the type  
15 of pet (i.e., dog, cat, other), the breed of the pet, and the date the pet was vaccinated. Some or all of this information is then stored in the searchable database described above.

              The tag preferably contains rabies information on a first side, typically including the veterinarian's name and phone number as well as a series of alpha-  
20 numeric digits, and registration information on a second side, including an Internet URL whereat information may be obtained for reuniting a lost registered pet with their owner.

              The multi-purpose rabies tag is worn just like the conventional one-sided rabies tag. The tag instructs persons who may find the pet to contact the host computer. The host computer then prompts the person who found the pet to enter information from  
25 the tag, including the alpha-numeric digits and the veterinarian's name and phone number. The host computer then compares the information entered by the finder of the pet to the information previously entered by the pet owners to try to find a match. If a match is found, the host computer provides the finder of the pet with the contact information for the owner of the pet so that the finder may contact the owner.

30               The present invention provides numerous advantages over conventional lost pet location methods. For example, the present invention provides a nationwide, web-based pet registration, search, and retrieval system that may be accessed by anyone, from anywhere, and at any time to locate the owner of a lost pet. Furthermore,

the pet needs wear only the single, multi-purpose tag. Thus, the method is highly-effective, inexpensive, and easy to use, and therefore is attractive to all pet owners and the animal health industry.

Additionally, because the present invention encourages pet owners to register their pets with the host computer before the pets are lost, a person who finds a lost pet may locate the owner of the pet immediately after the pet is found. Moreover, because the contact information for pet owners is stored on the host computer rather than being printed on a tag worn by the pets, and because pet owners may periodically update the contact information on the host computer if they move and/or change phone numbers, the contact information is always current. Therefore, pet owners do not have to order new pet tags each time their contact information changes.

The system also allows owners to register their pets with a participating municipality at the same time the owner registers with the lost pet identification system. The multi-purpose tag complies with all state and municipal requirements. This online municipal registration scheme should increase pet owner compliance by making the licensing procedure fast and easy. Municipal licensing fees can be collected on behalf of and forwarded to the municipality.

These and other important aspects of the present invention are described more fully in the detailed description below.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

A preferred embodiment of the present invention is described in detail below with reference to the attached drawing figures, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram of certain computer hardware that may be used to implement a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a flow diagram broadly depicting the steps performed by a pet owner when registering his or her pet with the host computer.

Fig. 3 is a flow diagram broadly depicting the steps performed by a person who finds a lost pet in attempting to locate the pet owner.

Fig. 4 is a flow diagram broadly depicting the steps performed by a pet owner who has lost a pet and who has not previously registered their pet with the host computer.

Fig. 5 is a flow diagram broadly depicting the steps performed by a pet owner in updating certain pet information stored on or accessible by the host computer.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

5 Turning now to the drawing figures, and particularly Fig. 1, computer hardware that may be used to implement the method of the present invention is illustrated. Specifically, the invention is preferably implemented with a host computer 10 that is coupled with a plurality of user computers 12 by a communications network 14.

10 The host computer 10 serves as a repository for information provided by pet owners and finders of lost pets and is programmed to perform the functions described below. The host computer may be any computing device such as a network computer running Windows NT, Novell Net Ware, Unix, or other network operating system. The computer program that operates the host computer to perform the method  
15 of the present invention may be written in any computer language such as C+ and/or HTML as a matter of design choice.

20 The host computer 10 is preferably connected to another computing device 16 that serves as a firewall to prevent tampering with information stored on or accessible by the host computer and may also be connected with other computing devices such as a computer 18 by a local area network or other network to permit an administrator of the host computer to maintain and monitor the host computer. The host computer preferably includes conventional web hosting operating software and includes an Internet connection such as a modem, DSL converter, or ISDN converter. The host computer is assigned a domain name such as "awolpet.com" so that it can be accessed  
25 via the Internet in a conventional manner.

30 The user computers 12 may be operated by pet owners while registering their pets and finders of lost pets when attempting to reunite the lost pets with their owners. The user computers may be any type of conventional computing devices including personal computers such as the ones sold by Dell, Compaq, Gateway, or other computer manufacturers. The user computers are networked to the host computer 10 via the communications network 14. The communications network is preferably the Internet, but may also be any other type of network such as a local area network, a wide area network, an Intranet, or even a wireless network. Each user computer preferably



includes a conventional Internet connection such as a modem, DSL converter, or ISDN converter and a web browser that permits it to access the Internet and the host computer via the communications network.

The above-described hardware may be used for three primary purposes:

- 5 (1) to permit pet owners to register their rabies vaccinated pets with the host computer, (2) to permit pet owners to license their pets with a participating municipality, and (3) to permit persons who find lost pets to search for and locate the lost pet's owners. The hardware may also be used for other purposes such as permitting pet owners who have lost their pets, but who did not previously register their pets, to post information about  
10 their lost pets, and to permit pet owners to update information that they have previously stored in the host computer. These functions and features and others are described in more detail below.

### **Pet Registration**

15 The pet registration procedure allows pet owners to register their pets with the host computer 10 so that, if the pets become lost, people who find the pets can access the host computer and locate the owners. To encourage widespread use of the present invention and to increase its effectiveness, the pet registration process is preferably performed in connection with conventional pet vaccination procedures.

20 Specifically, once a pet has been vaccinated, the owner has the option of registering the pet and/or licensing the pet as well. Registration and licensing can be accomplished simultaneously, and a single multi-purpose tag will be provided indicating proof of vaccination and pet identification information. Veterinarians order the tags from manufacturers specializing in rabies tags. Each combination tag has a first side, which  
25 provides the veterinarian's name and phone number (address in some instances) and a unique set of digits, usually four, but sometimes up to seven, and a second side, which provides information, including an Internet URL, for reuniting the lost pet with its owner. Each year the rabies tag color and shape changes. The tags are necessary for proof of vaccinations because most state laws require yearly rabies vaccinations. The present  
30 invention may be used regardless of the time interval of the vaccinations.

The pet registration process may be performed either manually or electronically. For the manual method, a veterinarian or some other distribution source will give a pet owner a form to complete that seeks information about the pet owner, the

pet, and the veterinarian. For example, the form preferably seeks contact information for the pet owner including the owner's name, address (optional), phone numbers (mandatory) and e-mail address (optional). The form also seeks pet information including the pet's name, type of pet (dog, cat, other), breed, rabies vaccination number or other license number, rabies tag color and the date, month and year of vaccination (all mandatory) and veterinarian information including the veterinarian's name, address and phone number (all mandatory). The form may also ask how long the vaccination lasts.

The form will also give the owner the option of simultaneously licensing the pet, if required, with the appropriate municipality, if that municipality is participating. Any associated licensing fees will be collected by the registration service and forwarded to the municipality. Municipalities may participate through contractual arrangement with the registration service provider.

Once the pet owner has completed the form, either the veterinarian or the pet owner mails the form to the administrator of the host computer 10 so that the information may be entered. The pet owner may also be required to send a registration fee along with the form. The information is stored, along with information entered by other pet owners, in a searchable database that may be used to locate lost pets as described below. The searchable database may be stored on the host computer or in external memory accessible by the host computer.

Once the information has been entered into the database, the administrator may send the pet owner a confirmation letter confirming that the information has been received and entered into the database. The confirmation letter may also be sent automatically by the host computer 10 via e-mail. As more people begin to use the pet registration and searching services of the present invention, the multi-purpose tags will become so well known that people who find a lost pet will check the tag to see if the pet is registered with the host computer.

The electronic registration process is similar to the manual process except that the pet owner enters the information from one of the user computers 12 while on line with the host computer 10. Specifically, as depicted in Fig. 2, a pet owner may access the host computer and select an icon from a user interface screen to indicate that he or she wishes to register a pet as depicted in step 200. The host computer then prompts the pet owner to enter his or her contact information, the pet information, and

the veterinarian information as depicted in steps 202, 204, 206. If the pet owner wishes to simultaneously license their pet with the appropriate participating municipality, they may so indicate 207 and information entered in previous steps 202,204,206 will also be applied to this purpose. The host computer then posts the information on the searchable  
5 database as depicted in step 208 and may assign the user an I.D. and a password as depicted in step 210. The user I.D. and password may be used later by the pet owner to gain access to his or her records in the host computer to change the pet information or contact information as described in more detail below. The host computer may also prompt payment for the services, and, if applicable, the municipal licensing fee, by  
10 asking for a credit card number as depicted in step 212. The host computer and/or administrator then sends, in step 214, a confirmation letter and, if the multi-purpose rabies tag is not being used, a single tag indicating that the pet is registered with the service.

To encourage pet owners to seek regular health exams and necessary  
15 vaccination, the method of the present invention preferably requires pet owners to renew their registration, and, if applicable, municipal license, either yearly or during some other time interval. The renewal process requires a pet owner to complete the pet registration steps either manually or electronically as described above or may merely require entry of information that has changed such as new information on a more current rabies tag.  
20 To remind pet owners that they must renew their registration, the host computer 10 may automatically send a reminder notice via e-mail or other means.

### **Lost Pet Searching**

The lost pet searching procedures of the present invention allow people  
25 who find lost pets to access the host computer 10 and search for the owners of the pets. Specifically, as depicted in Fig. 3, a person may access the host computer via one of the user computers 12 and select an icon on the user interface to indicate that they have found a lost pet as depicted in step 300. The host computer then asks the person whether the lost pet has a rabies tag having an assigned set of digits in step 302. If the  
30 person indicates yes, the host computer prompts entry of the information on the tag, including the veterinarian's name and phone number or some other licensing institution, the rabies vaccination number, and the year the tag was issued.

The host computer 10 then compares the entered information to the information in the searchable database in an attempt to find a match as depicted in step 306. The search criteria may be any part of the information entered by the person who found the pet. For example, the host computer may only search to determine if the entered rabies vaccination number matches a rabies vaccination number in the database or may search based on other entered information. If a match is found, the host computer displays the pet's name as well as the selected contact information for the owner which may include the owner's name and telephone numbers as depicted in steps 308 and 310. If a match is not found, the host computer may recommend that the person contact the veterinarian as depicted in steps 310 and 312 or may proceed to step 314 as described below.

Step 314 prompts the person to enter characteristics of the found pet if no match was found in step 308 or if the pet did not have a rabies tag or other identifying tag as depicted in step 302. The pet characteristics may include the type of pet found (i.e., cat, dog, or other), the breed of the pet, the date the pet was found, and the location where the pet was found. The host computer 10 may also prompt the finder of the pet to enter their name and phone number so that they may be contacted by the owner as described below.

The host computer 10 then posts the information entered by the finder on a computer bulletin board or other memory that may be accessed by the computer 12 as depicted in step 316. The host computer may also perform a search to determine if the entered pet characteristics match pet characteristics that have been entered by an owner of a lost pet as described in the following section.

### **Locating Unregistered Pets**

The present invention also permits pet owners to post information regarding lost pets on the host computer 10 even if they did not register the pets before they were lost. Specifically, as depicted in Fig. 4, a pet owner may access the host computer and select an icon indicating that they have lost a pet as depicted in step 400. The host computer then prompts the pet owner to enter characteristics of their pet such as the type of pet (i.e., cat, dog, or other), the breed of the pet, the date the pet was lost, and the location where the pet was lost as depicted in step 402. This information is not generally viewable by or available to finders.

Preferably, the finder of a lost pet can obtain information about the lost pet's owner only if the pet was registered and the finder is able to enter information from a recognized identifier, such as a tag, microchip, or tattoo. Otherwise, information obtained from the finder of a lost pet is posted to a separate searchable database (step 404). A pet owner uses search filters to search (step 406) this database. If a match is found, the pet owner is given the finders' contact information.

### **Updating Pet Information**

The pet updating procedures of the present invention allow pet owners who have previously registered their pets to periodically update any information that has changed since the last registration. A pet owner may do so by contacting the host computer 10 via one of the user computers 12 and selecting an icon indicating that they wish to update their pet information as depicted in step 500 of Fig. 5. The host computer then prompts the pet owner to enter his or her I.D. and password as depicted in step 502 and then prompts entry of changes to the contact information or pet information as depicted in step 504. The host computer then posts the changes to the appropriate database records as depicted in step 506.

### **Municipal Licensing**

The present invention also allows for the simultaneous licensing of pets with the appropriate municipality. This service is available only for residents of participating municipalities. A municipality may participate by contractual arrangement with the registration service provider by paying a one-time set-up fee and, preferably, a per pet fee. Licensing fees are collected on behalf of and forwarded to the municipality. Licensing information is collected from pet owners in conjunction with registration information, is stored on the service provider's system, and is available online to the municipalities using access codes provided to them.

### **Other Features**

The host computer 10 may also be programmed to provide other services. For example, the host computer may be accessed by veterinarians to reorder registration forms or by pet owners who desire to obtain information about the pet registration and search services. Moreover, the user interface screens displayed by the

host computer may include information about participating veterinarians. This information may include a list of participating veterinarians by state and city and contact information for the veterinarians. This service encourages veterinarians to support and encourage use of the present invention and assists new pet owners in locating  
5 veterinarians in their areas.

The host computer 10 may also permit pet owners to post rewards for the safe return of their pets. Finders of lost pets may then collect these rewards after a lost pet has been reunited with its owner.

Although the invention has been described with reference to the preferred  
10 embodiment illustrated in the attached drawing figures, it is noted that equivalents may be employed and substitutions made herein without departing from the scope of the invention as recited in the claims. For example, although the method of the present invention preferably searches for lost pets using an identifier associated with rabies vaccination, pets may be registered using other identifiers such as those associated with  
15 microchips, tattoos, tags other than rabies tags, etc., or identifiers assigned by the host computer or veterinarian. The present invention functions identically using these alternative identifiers.

A distinctive collar may be issued which is operable to communicate that the wearer is registered with the system of the present invention. Alternatively, the  
20 information present on the multi-purpose tag may be also be provided on a sticker that can be adhered to the pet's rabies tag or collar.

Although the present invention preferably provides the finder of a lost pet with contact information that allows the finder to contact the pet owner directly, the host computer may also be configured to provide contact information that allows either the  
25 pet owner or the finder of the pet to remain anonymous. For example, the host computer may direct the finder of a lost pet to contact the pet's veterinarian rather than the owner and/or the host computer may permit the finder of a pet to remain anonymous when notifying the pet owner that the pet has been found.

Having thus described the preferred embodiment of the invention, what is  
30 claimed as new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent includes the following:

CLAIMS:

1. A method of locating a lost pet, the method comprising the steps of:
  - (a) prompting a pet owner to provide pet information relating to their pet, including an identifier, and contact information for the pet owner;
  - 5 (b) storing the pet information and the contact information in a computer-readable memory accessible by a host computer;
  - (c) providing an information reference device to accompany the pet, the information reference device communicating lost pet information about the pet, including the identifier, for reuniting the pet with the owner;
  - 10 (d) allowing a person who finds the pet to access the host computer via a communications network and to enter the lost pet information provided by the information reference device;
  - (e) comparing in the host computer the lost pet information entered by the person who found the pet to the pet information provided by the pet owner in an attempt to find a match; and
  - 15 (f) if a match is found, providing the person who found the lost pet with the contact information for the pet owner.
2. The method as set forth in claim 1, the pet being vaccinated for rabies, the identifier being based upon the rabies vaccination, and the information reference device being a rabies tag worn by the pet.
- 20 3. The method as set forth in claim 1, further including in step (a) the option of allowing the owner to license the pet with a municipality.
- 25 4. The method as set forth in claim 1, the information reference device being a municipal license tag.
5. The method as set forth in claim 1, the information reference device being a microchip implanted in the pet.
- 30 6. The method as set forth in claim 4, the information reference device being a tattoo appearing on the pet's skin.

7. The method as set forth in claim 1, the information reference device being a collar.

8. The method as set forth in claim 1, the communications network including the Internet.

9. The method as set forth in claim 1, the pet information being information selected from the group consisting of a veterinarian's name for the pet, the veterinarian's phone number, a licensing agency, a number from a rabies tag for the pet, a year that the pet was vaccinated, an indication of a pet type for the pet, an indication of a breed of the pet, a color of the pet, a date the pet was found, and a location where the pet was found.

10. The method as set forth in claim 1, the contact information being information selected from the group consisting of the pet owner's name, the pet owner's address, the pet owner's telephone number, a veterinarian for the pet, the veterinarian's address, and the veterinarian's phone number.



11. A computer program stored on a computer-readable memory device for operating a computer to aid in locating lost pets, the computer program comprising:

- a code segment for receiving from a pet owner pet information, including an identifier, relating to a pet and contact information for the pet owner;
- 5 a code segment for storing the pet information and the contact information in computer-readable memory accessible by a host computer;
- a code segment for permitting a person who finds the pet to access the host computer via a communications network and to enter lost pet information relating to the lost pet;
- 10 a code segment for comparing the lost pet information entered by the person who found the pet to the pet information provided by the pet owner in an attempt to find a match; and
- a code segment for providing the person who found the lost pet with the contact information for the owner of the lost pet if a match is found.

15

12. The computer program as set forth in claim 10, further including a code segment for allowing the owner to license the pet with a municipality.

13. The computer program as set forth in claim 10, the pet being  
20 vaccinated for rabies and the identifier being related to the rabies vaccination.

14. The computer program as set forth in claim 10, the pet information being information selected from the group consisting of a veterinarian's name for the pet, the veterinarian's phone number, a licensing agency, a number from a rabies tag for the  
25 pet, a year that the pet was vaccinated, an indication of a pet type for the pet, an indication of a breed of the pet, a color of the pet, a date the pet was found, and a location where the pet was found.

15. The computer program as set forth in claim 10, the contact information  
30 being information selected from the group consisting of the pet owner's name, the pet owner's address, the pet owner's telephone number, a veterinarian for the pet, the veterinarian's address, and the veterinarian's phone number.

16. A system to aid in locating lost pets, the system comprising:  
a host computer accessible via a communications network and programmed to:  
receive from a pet owner pet information, including an identifier, relating  
to a pet and contact information for the pet owner;  
5 store the pet information and the contact information in computer-  
readable memory accessible by a host computer;  
permit a person who finds a pet to access the host computer via a  
communications network and to enter lost pet information relating  
to the lost pet;  
10 compare the lost pet information entered by the person who found the pet  
to the pet information provided by the pet owner in an attempt to  
find a match;  
provide the person who found the lost pet with the contact information for  
the owner of the lost pet if a match is found; and  
15 an information reference device to accompany the pet and communicate the  
identifier.

17. The system as set forth in claim 15, the host computer being further  
programmed to allow the owner to license the pet with a municipality.

18. The system as set forth in claim 15, the pet being vaccinated for  
rabies, the identifier being related to the rabies vaccination, and the information  
reference device being a rabies tag.

19. The system as set forth in claim 15, the information reference device  
being a license tag.

20. The system as set forth in claim 15, the information reference device  
being a microchip.

21. The system as set forth in claim 15, the information reference device  
being a tattoo.

22. The system as set forth in claim 15, the information reference device being a collar.

23. The system as set forth in claim 15, the pet information being information selected from the group consisting of a veterinarian's name for the pet, the veterinarian's phone number, a licensing agency, a number from a rabies tag for the pet, a year that the pet was vaccinated, an indication of a pet type for the pet, an indication of a breed of the pet, a color of the pet, a date the pet was found, and a location where the pet was found.

24. The system as set forth in claim 15, the contact information being information selected from the group consisting of the pet owner's name, the pet owner's address, the pet owner's telephone number, a veterinarian for the pet, the veterinarian's address, and the veterinarian's phone number.

25. The system as set forth in claim 15, the information reference device further communicating an Internet address whereat the person finding the pet may access the host computer in an attempt to reunite the pet with its owner.

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A nationwide, web-based pet registration, search and retrieval system. The system is implemented with a host computer (10) that may be accessed by users operating user computers (12) via a communications network (14) such as the Internet. Pet owners may register their pet with the host computer and finders of lost pets may search the host computer in an attempt to locate the owners of lost pets. Preferably, the rabies vaccinated pet wears a single multi-purpose tag which communicates both the pet's rabies vaccination information and information for reuniting the pet with its owner. Rabies vaccination is not a prerequisite, however, and almost any relatively unique identifier will work, including microchip numbers, tattoos, other types of identification tags, etc. The system also allows an owner to license the pet with a participating municipality.

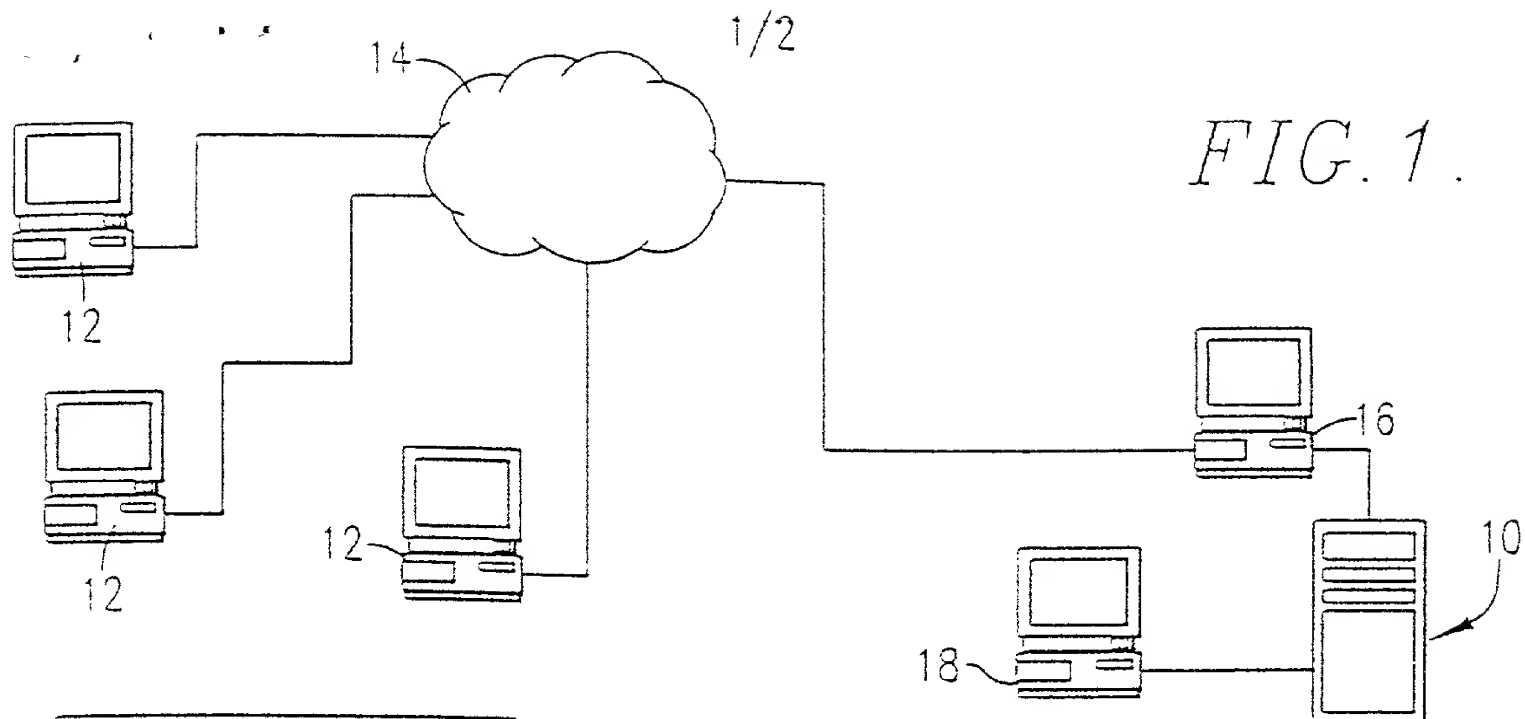


FIG 2

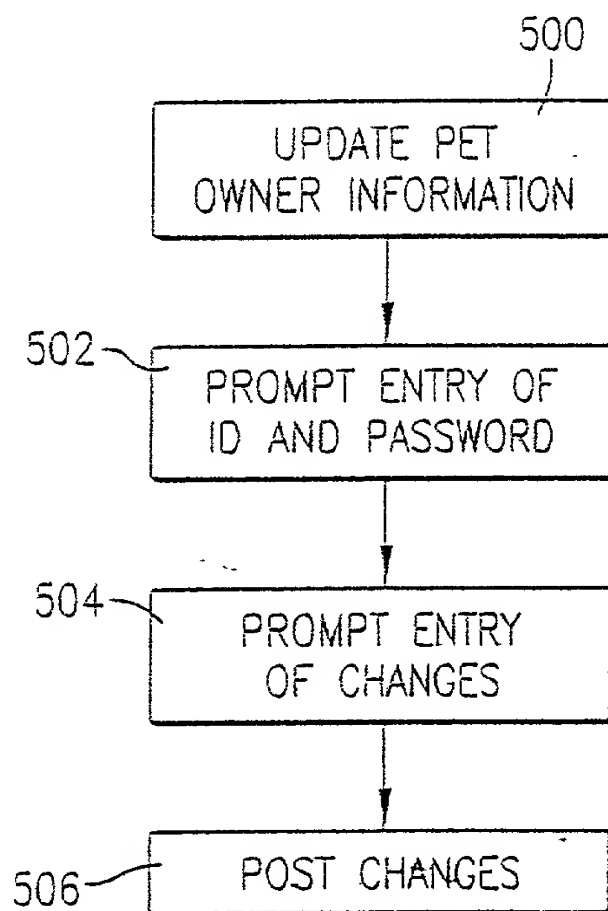
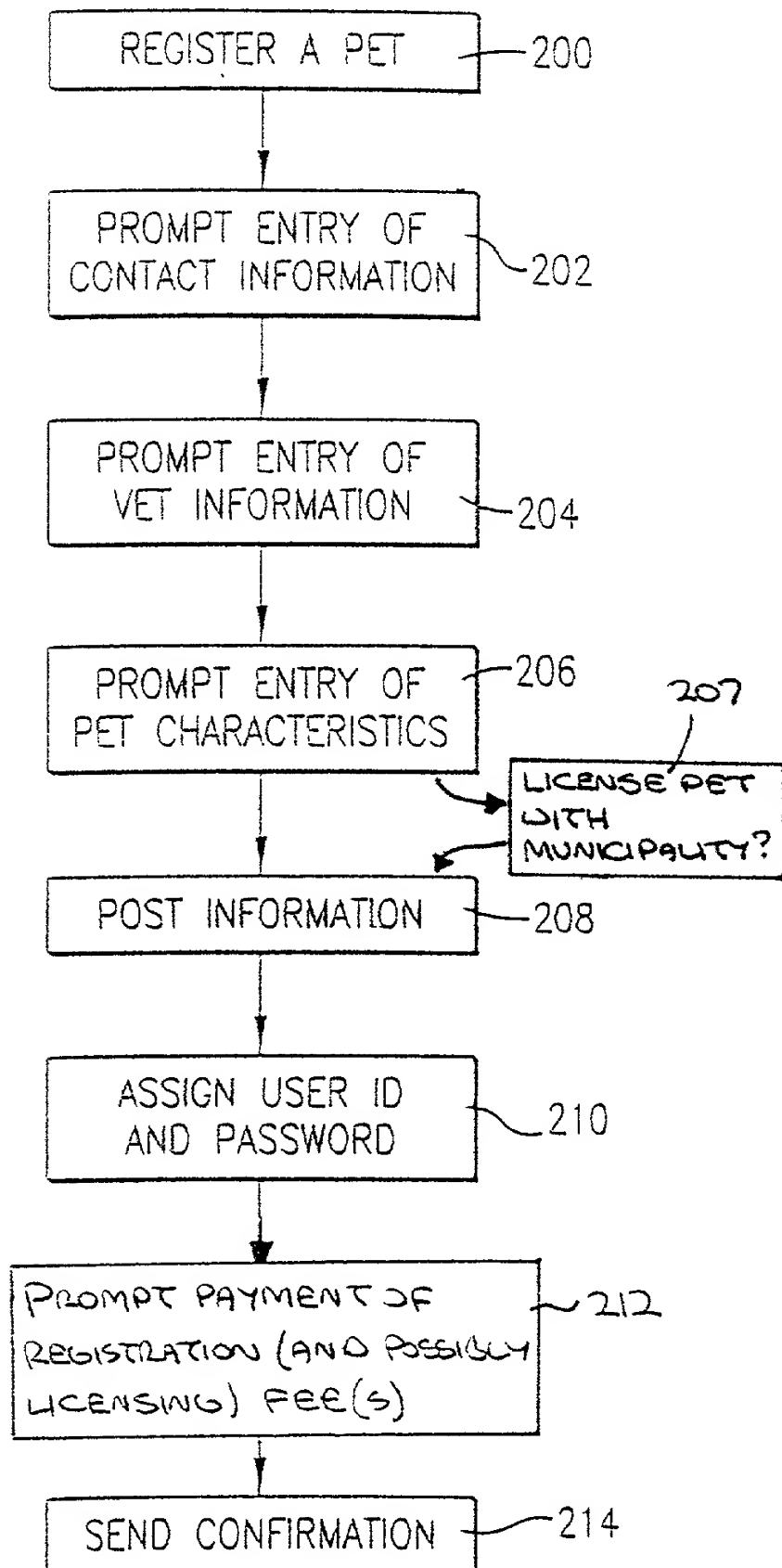


FIG. 5.

FIG. 3.

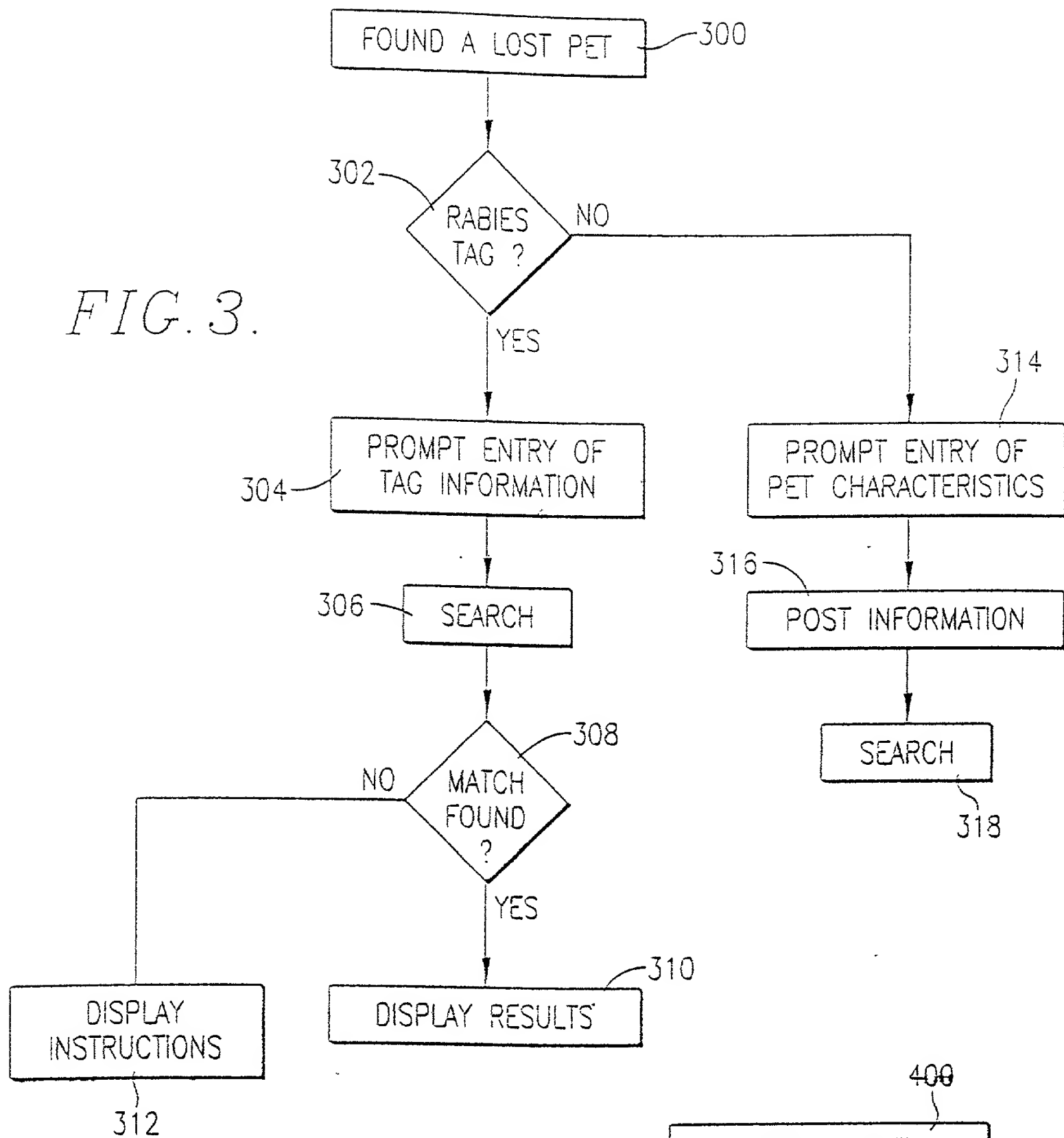
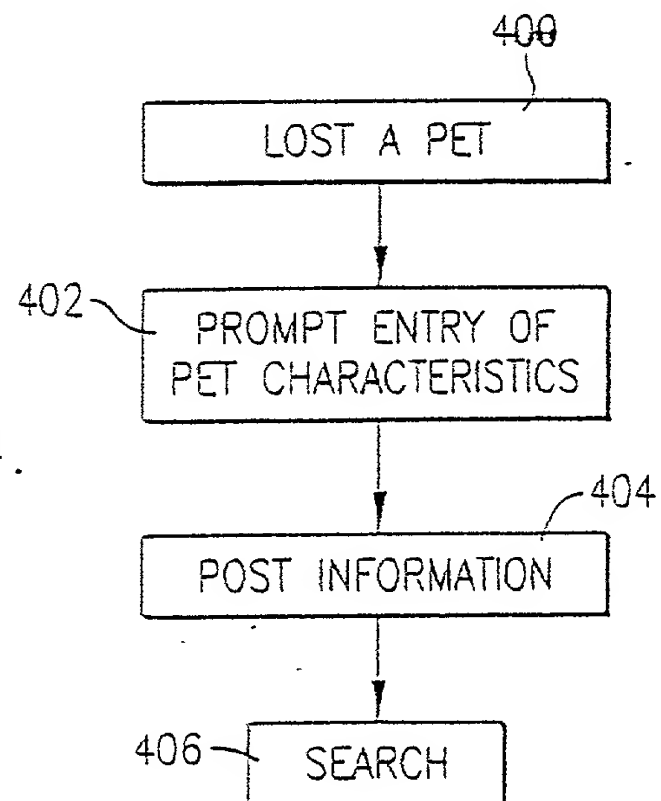


FIG. 4.



COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY (Original, Design, National Stage of PCT or CIP Application)	ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NO. 30010-A
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As a below named inventor I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name, I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

SINGLE TAG PET REGISTRATION, SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM WITH MUNICIPAL LICENSING OPTION
--

the specification of which: (complete (a), (b) or (c) for type of application)

**REGULAR OR DESIGN APPLICATION**

- (a) [ X ] is attached hereto.  
(b) [ ] was filed on as Application Serial No. and was amended on (if applicable).

**PCT FILED APPLICATION ENTERING NATIONAL PHASE**

- (c) [ ] was described and claimed in International Application No. filed and as amended on (if any).

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF REVIEW OF PAPERS AND DUTY OF CANDOR**

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56(a).

[ ] In compliance with this duty there is attached an information disclosure statement. 37 CFR 1.97.

**PRIORITY CLAIM**

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed: (complete (d) or (e))

- (d) [ X ] no such applications have been filed.  
(e) [ ] such applications have been filed as follows

EARLIEST FOREIGN APPLICATION(S), IF ANY FILED WITHIN 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO SAID APPLICATION				
Country	Application No.	Date of Filing	Date of Issue	Priority Claimed
				<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
				<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
				<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
ALL FOREIGN APPLICATION(S), IF ANY FILED MORE THAN 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO SAID APPLICATION				

**PROVISIONAL**

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 119(e) of any United States application(s) listed below:

Application Serial No.	Filing Date	Status (patented, pending, abandoned)
------------------------	-------------	---------------------------------------

**CONTINUATION-IN-PART**

(Complete This Part Only If This Is A Continuation-In-Part Application)

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56(a), which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of the continuation-in-part application:

09/483,172	01/14/00	Pending
Application Serial No.	Filing Date	Status (patented, pending, abandoned)

**POWER OF ATTORNEY**

As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith:

Robert D. Hovey	19,223	Thomas B. Luebbering	37,874
Warren N. Williams	19,156	Andrew G. Colombo	40,565
Stephen D. Timmons	26,513	Scott R. Brown	40,535
John M. Collins	26,262	Tracy L. Bornman	42,347
Thomas H. Van Hoozer	32,761	Tracey S. Truitt	43,205

SEND CORRESPONDENCE TO:  
THOMAS B. LUEBBERING  
HOVEY, WILLIAMS, TIMMONS & COLLINS  
2405 Grand, Suite 400  
Kansas City, Missouri 64108

DIRECT TELEPHONE CALLS TO:  
  
(816) 474-9050

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

Full name of sole or first inventor	DEBORAH TATE WELSH		
Inventor's Signature	<i>Deborah Welsh</i>		
Date	<i>8/23/00</i>	Country of Citizenship	United States of America
Residence	649 W. Meyer Boulevard, Kansas City, MO 64113		
Post Office Address	649 W. Meyer Boulevard, Kansas City, MO 64113		
Full name of second joint inventor, if any			
Inventor's Signature			
Date		Country of Citizenship	
Residence			
Post Office Address			